

JONAH'S ANGRY PRAYER

The Reluctant Prophet, Pt. 5: Jonah 4:1-5

October 8, 2023

And there was evil against Jonah, great evil, and he became angry.

Jonah 4:1 (Doug's working translation, see the ESV notes)

This week: Jonah's need for grace (Next week: how God is going to provide)

¹⁰ When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. ² He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. ³ Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

⁴ But the LORD replied, "Have you any right to be angry?"

⁵ Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. ⁶ Then the LORD God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. ⁷ But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?"

"I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die."

¹⁰ But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. ¹¹ But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

Jonah 3:10-4:11

1. "Great" and "evil" weren't only for the wind and the city, but for Jonah!

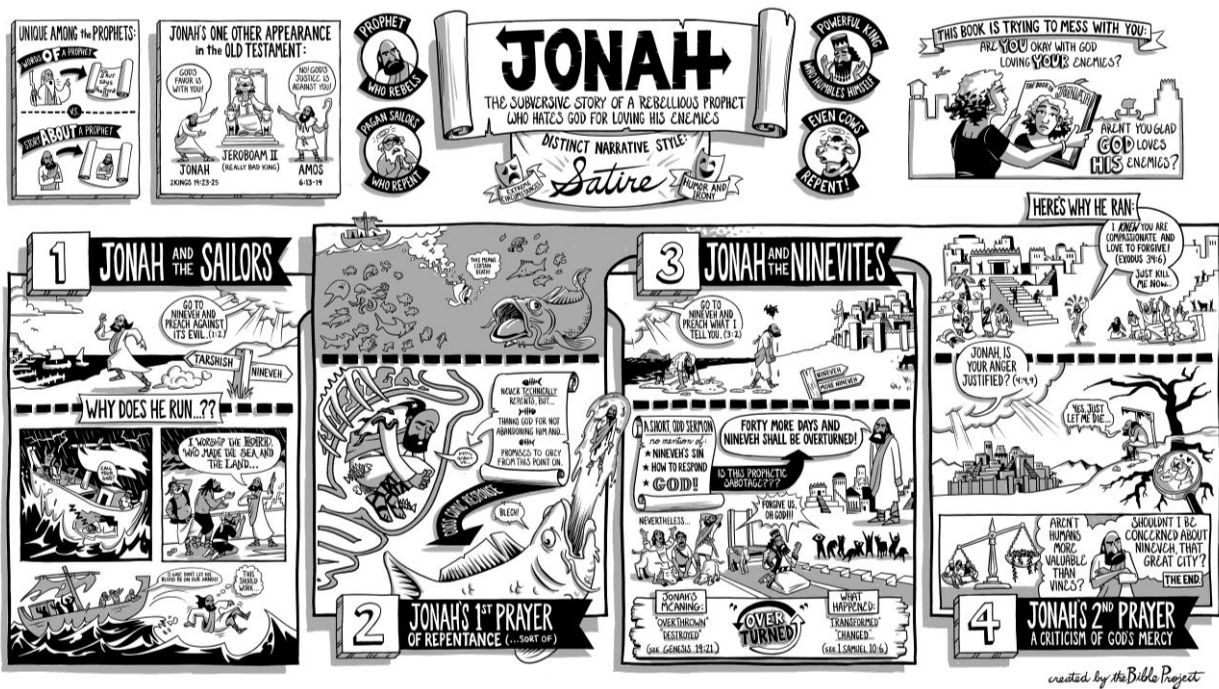
2. Keller suggests that Jonah reflects:

both sons in Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15

the reverse of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10

in both cases a failure of grace

3. There is a reason Jonah moves "east of Nineveh" – he is still running from God



What Jonah knew about God's character

1. God had already revealed himself

⁴ So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. ⁵ Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. ⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin . . ."

Exodus 34 (see Psalm 145 and the great *hesed* passages like Nehemiah 9:17,32)

3. Jonah learned God's character personally and existentially

³⁰ "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent!!"

Jonah 1-2

3. God had dealt graciously with Samaria (and Jonah's job had been to declare this message)

²³ In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years. ²⁴ He did evil in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit. ²⁵ He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher.

²⁶ The LORD had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering; there was no one to help them. ²⁷ And since the LORD had not said he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Jehoash.

2 Kings 14

How will we know Jonah (or myself) really understands God's *hesed* love?

1. I will see the Ninevites as fellow image-bearers whom God loves and he should love

²⁵ *On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

²⁶ *"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"*

²⁷ *He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

²⁸ *"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."*

²⁹ *But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

³⁰ *In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jerich*

Luke 10

Grace changes the way I look at the people around me.

Heard by Doug during recent Anacortes conversation

3. I would stay in Nineveh – God's *hesed* is incarnational

¹⁴ *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 1

2. I would celebrate instead of pout

²² *"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.*

²⁴ *For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'* So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ *"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'*

²⁸ *"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.*

³⁰ *But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'*

³¹ *" 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'*

Luke 15

Resources for further study

The Bible Project team does a great job of introducing Jonah at <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-jonah/>

Spurgeon has five sermons on Jonah at this Monergism site: <https://www.biblebb.com/brefindex/jon.htm>

For Jonah 3, I recommend Spurgeon's "Who Can Tell" at <https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/0275.htm>

Doug's Logos library includes a helpful Bible study by Paul Mackrell (Day One Publishing, 2007)

Sam Millen recommends Keller's study of Jonah in *The Prodigal Prophet* (Viking, 2018) and his article at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jonah-prodigal-prophet/>

The Gospel Coalition has these articles based on Keller's *The Prodigal Prophet*:

"Fishy Story" at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/tim-keller-fishy-story/>

"Meet Jonah" at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jonah-prodigal-prophet/>

and a podcast on "The Mystery of Mercy" at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/tgc-podcast/jonah-and-the-mystery-of-mercy/>

Erik Manning has an interesting discussion of the scientific questions around the Jonah sign/miracle at <https://crossexamined.org/the-mind-blowing-meaning-behind-the-sign-of-jonah/>

Doug likes the ESV Study Bible's introduction to Jonah included below.